THE LIMNER COMPANY



FRENCH SCHOOL (18th century)

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman, Mr ‘R’, wearing lilac coloured jacket

Circa: circa 1785

circa 1785

Watercolour on ivory (licence PJE9TVQ8)

Oval, 75mm (3 inches) high

A Gentleman, Mr ‘R’, wearing lilac coloured jacket, threaded with gold stripes, white waistcoat embroidered with gold thread, frilled shirt and cravat tied with a bow, a gold brooch with the letter ‘R’ pinned to his cravat; a miniature on his right sleeve; cane; landscape background.

The mysterious Mr R in this large portrait miniature is clearly making a statement – not only in his fine dress and gold-topped cane, but in the miniature he wears prominently on the sleeve of his jacket.

This miniature signals the intent of the portrait as a likely a gift to a loved one. The mid 1780s were also the period for Romanticism in art (roughly spanning the same period as the French Revolution – from 1783-89). This miniature seems to evoke that new interest in human emotion – as well as a new spiritual relationship with nature, shown with the natural forest background here.

The size of this miniature suggests that if it were worn, it would be quite the statement on the part of the wearer (contemporary paintings do show women wearing miniatures of this size, however impractical we think that might have been). Although we have been unable to pinpoint an artist, the painter was

clearly highly trained and influenced by miniaturists such as Antoine Vestier (1740-1824), who was also able to render such detail and texture in watercolour.